

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Architecture--Early Modern  
(Commercial-Industrial)

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Wainwright Building

AND/OR COMMON

Wainwright Building

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 709 Chestnut Street

CITY, TOWN

St. Louis

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Missouri

CODE

29

COUNTY

St. Louis

CODE

510

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

\_\_DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

\_\_STRUCTURE

\_\_SITE

\_\_OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

☒ PUBLIC

\_\_PRIVATE

\_\_BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

\_\_IN PROCESS

\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

\_\_OCCUPIED

\_\_UNOCCUPIED

☒ WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

\_\_YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_YES: UNRESTRICTED

☒ NO

**PRESENT USE**

\_\_AGRICULTURE

\_\_COMMERCIAL

\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

☒ GOVERNMENT

\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_MILITARY

\_\_MUSEUM

\_\_PARK

\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_RELIGIOUS

\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_TRANSPORTATION

\_\_OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

State of Missouri (Office of Administration, Division of Design  
and Construction)

STREET & NUMBER

State Capitol Building

CITY, TOWN

Jefferson City

VICINITY OF

STATE

Missouri 65101

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

City Hall, Assessor's Office

STREET & NUMBER

Room 114, 12th and Market Streets

CITY, TOWN

St. Louis

STATE

Missouri 63103

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1940

☒ FEDERAL \_\_STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress/Annex, Prints and Photographs Division

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.



## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT  
☐ GOOD  
☒ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED  
☒ ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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#### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Wainwright Building is a ten-story office building constructed 1890-91 and designed by Louis Sullivan. The first two floors are faced in brown sandstone, severely plain; the next seven stories rise in continuous red brick piers, those on the corners three times the width of those between the windows. The set-back windows are alternated with spandrel panels of red terra cotta decorated with ornate foliage reliefs, varied at each floor in design and scale. The tenth story is a frieze of intertwined leaf scrolls framing circular windows, and is capped with Sullivan's characteristic overhanging roof slab, its edge also decorated.

All the technical elements that had become standard features of Chicago office buildings in the late 1880's are present for the first time in Sullivan's designs with the Wainwright: raft footings of reinforced concrete, the braced and rivetted steel frame, the wall bays carried on spandrel shelf angles, the fireproof-tile covering of all structural members, and movable interior partitions. Above the skylighted ground floor, the U-shaped plan provides an outer exposure for each office.

The quality of height in the Wainwright is emphasized through the use of a system of closely ranked pierlike bands that give the street elevations their forceful vertical thrust. False piers between each pair of true piers reinforce the image of a powerful upward movement.

Recently a surplus of office space in downtown St. Louis threatened the Wainwright Building with demolition. The National Trust for Historic Preservation purchased the structure's lease late in 1973, and later sold it to the State of Missouri. The Missouri Division of Design and Construction had determined to renovate the Wainwright Building and construct additional, compatible, office space on the remainder of the same city block. A design competition was held and won by the firm of Mitchell and Giurgola from Philadelphia, in association with Hastings and Shivetta of St. Louis (an artist's conception of the winning design is enclosed in this file). By February, 1975, the State had purchased all the property on the Wainwright city block and was ready to implement plans for demolishing all other structures there. Authorization had been given to go ahead with the renovation of the Wainwright itself, though funds for the additional office space were still awaiting legislative approval.



## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1890-91

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Louis Sullivan

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Wainwright Building was the first Adler and Sullivan commission involving the use of completely iron and steel framing. The structure was built between 1890 and 1891 for Ellis Wainwright, a wealthy St. Louis brewer with a wide range of aesthetic interests. The resulting design represents Sullivan's most thorough attempt to create a special form appropriate to the multi-story office block.

"Sullivan explained in an essay, "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered," that the appearance of an office building should reflect the activities within. First, the entrance should be obvious. The main floor shops need large windows for advertising their wares. Above, the identical office floors are designed to be subdivided in many different ways; thus, their windows should be identical, none more important than any other. Finally, the attic story terminates the building visually and houses mechanical equipment and service spaces. This internal arrangement is clearly expressed in the exterior of the Wainwright Building.

"Why is this building probably the greatest work of architecture of the Nineteenth Century? How does it differ from one of the neighboring buildings of the same time? Architecture is not decoration; it is far more. It is essential not to mistake surface for substance. Prior to the Wainwright Building, steel frame structures had been covered with architectural cliches and trappings which bore no relation to the revolutionary new frame-work type of construction. They were covered with ill-fitting clothes borrowed from load-bearing types of construction. Sullivan not only conceived an original solution to the new problem of the steel frame, but an architectural expression hardly surpassed since. The Wainwright Building was not the first steel frame skyscraper; rather it is the first architectural solution, the first architectural expression of the high rise skeleton construction office building as such. It is architecturally the father of all contemporary office buildings. It is great because all elements, light and shadow, solids and voids, color, texture, materials, decoration, proportion and rhythm, work in concert expressing Sullivan's IDEA of a modern high rise office building. The neighboring buildings may or may not be pleasant, but they lack the unity, the internal harmony the coherence present in this great work of art."

....from an essay by W. Philip Cotton, Jr., AIA, St. Louis Architect and Preservationist, discussing the architectural significance of the Wainwright Building.

(Continued)



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CONTINUATION SHEET

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"When he brought the drawing board with the motive for the Wainwright outlined in profile and elevation upon it and threw the board down on my table, I was perfectly aware of what had happened.

"This was a great Louis H. Sullivan moment. The tall building was born tall. His greatest effort? No. But here was the 'skyscraper': a new thing beneath the sun, entity imperfect, but with virtue, individuality, beauty and all its own. Until Louis Sullivan showed the way, high buildings lacked unity. They were built-up in layers. All were fighting height instead of gracefully and honestly accepting it. What unity those false masonry masses have that now pile up toward the big city skies is due to the master mind that first perceived the high building as an harmonious unit--its height triumphant."

....Frank Lloyd Wright was working in the office of Adler and Sullivan and apparently was the chief draftsman when Sullivan conceived the Wainwright Building. Later Wright wrote of the birth of the Wainwright Building in Genius & the Mobocracy which is the source of the above quotation."

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From "announcement of an architectural competition for the design of the Wainwright Office Complex," State of Missouri Division of Design and Construction, Jefferson City, Missouri, 1974.



## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Condit, Carl W., The Chicago School of Architecture (Chicago, 1964).  
Connely, Willard, Louis Sullivan As He Lived: The Shaping of American Architecture (New York, 1960).  
Wright, Frank Lloyd, Genius and the Mobocracy (New York, 1949).  
Sheely, Horace J., "The Wainwright Building, Missouri," Special Report, Historic Sites Survey, 1968.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre  
UTM REFERENCES

A	1,5	7,4,4	4,5,0	4,2	7,8	9,0,0	B							
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING								
C							D							

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Wainwright Building is located on a city block facing Chestnut Street in downtown St. Louis. No other structure on the block has significant associations with it. The boundaries of the landmark site, then, are defined by the dimensions of the Wainwright Building foundations.

### LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Stephen Lissandrello, Historian, Landmarks Survey Project

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

April 10, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_

LOC Designated \_\_\_\_\_

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

DATE

DATE







